1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

123 slip was repeated all around the village as a good joke,
522 and I thought it was funny too. But not so an old man who
554 had been my principal instructor in the language. Much annoyed, he came to see me. He asked if I didn't realize that everyone knew he was my teacher, and that when I made a mistake it reflected on him? I was properly humble and said meekly that I would try and do better next time.

124 My field technique consisted of several procedures. I
126 worked with the most intelligent natives, men and women, as informants. We had long sessions at my house, when I secured magic and other ethnological data privately with one or two individuals at a time. Then, too, I attended every ceremony that took place during my stay and had long discussions about the rite after it occurred. I never went uninvited, but I was invited to everything. This was true also for purely masculine occasions such as the men's feasts. To these a couple of the important old men would escort me. I would sit quietly to one side, munching a banana or taro, and taking notes. My notebook and pencil accompanied me everywhere, and the natives took it quite for granted that I should write everything down. I explained that my memory was not good enough to remember everything they told me or that I saw, and so I wrote it down. This they understood, and some of them said that if they had writing, they would remember much better too.

123 Other times I would go to the gardens with the women, sit with them as they prepared the food, or join them as they gossiped and took their ease after a day's work. In the casual everyday life I was much more with the women than with the men. I felt quite free at all times to wander through the village, visiting my friends, and they in turn

3: Chinnery G, E-5 (1929) 1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

Ordinance. The political division, therefore, is the unit of government. In the centre of the settlements thus grouped together is the local government rest house (House Kiap), where official business is usually conducted. Throughout the paper I shall call political divisions "villages."

As the settlements themselves are scattered at irregular intervals in long straggling lines (sometimes a mile or more in length), I found it more convenient in collecting my data to follow the usual practice and call every one to the House Kiap for interrogation.

It would have been better, however, had I examined the various families where they lived and recorded the information alongside each house. This course would have taken up much more time, but it would have enabled me to see and talk to old, sick, and infirm people who had not been able to assemble at the House Kiap—people, who, though few in numbers, might have had important information for the records. During my investigation, information regarding such absentees was supplied by the local Luluais and friends of the missing ones. From the point of view of method, therefore, it is important that everyone should be seen and interrogated personally in the place where he lives.

The people were given notice of my coming, and invariably they were ready for interrogation the moment I arrived in a recording centre, i.e., the village House Kiap. Nearly everyone understood "pidgin English", but nevertheless competent interpreters, together with the more intelligent of the older men of each village, stood by to assist. The reason for the work and its relation to administrative activities for native welfare were explained in each village, and the importance of exactitude was stressed. Men and women were then called up and interrogated in turn. In each case, the birth-place of the husband and wife was entered for the purpose of investigating systems of inter-village marriage. Ages of men, women, and children could only be estimated. Males and females said to have passed the reproductive age are recorded as "old". Children apparently having passed the age of puberty appear in the age group as fourteen years and over. Opposite each man's name are all the women he has at any time married, and in line with each of these wives are the names of her male and female children, entered in order of birth. Those absent at school or work appear in a special column with the necessary additional particulars. The children of each marriage who have died were given by name (friends assisting where the memory of the mother was weak), but in the columns of deaths they appear as follows ♂ ♀ males and females dying during lactation, ♂ ♀ males and females stillborn, ♂ ♀ males and females dying after lactation. Special note is also made of first-born children who have died during lactation.

3:Chinnery G, E-5 (1929)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10

125 Adopted children appear in a special column, together with the
126 necessary particulars as to sex, age, clan, persons adopting and relationship between them and the children adopted. In the last column of all, remarks of a general nature are recorded. Thus every child, excepting orphans and adopted children, is shown in the same line as its real father and mother, i.e., the male and female socially recognized as the parents.

124 Among an intelligent people like the inhabitants of New Ireland, with cautious methods of inquiry, it should be a relatively simple task to record accurate demographic data. I found, however, that the information I received going down the road had to be amended a great deal when I checked it on the way back. The most frequent errors were in the records of motherless children, whose names were occasionally given in line with stepmothers instead of own mother, i.e., instead of naming dead mothers and their children in line, informants omitted the name of the dead mother and named the children in line with their stepmothers. This faulty information did not arise out of name prohibitions (for where these existed others present called the tabu name), but simply through carelessness on the part of informants whose attention relaxed as they became bored with the inquiry. Baker*, in his work on Espiritu Santo, says—"It might be that a census with any pretensions to accuracy could not be taken without seeing each person individually, and, indeed, I think that this would be so in most communities. But any one who knows the Melanesian is aware of the intense interest he takes in his relationship to other members of his village. I found that they delighted in giving me the information I required, and when I was quite weary, after more than an hour's session, they would be as interested as ever." In New Ireland, I found every one greatly interested in the inquiry, and willing to give information, nevertheless a great deal of incorrect material crept in. The collection of demographic material in this Territory, however intelligent the people may be, should be made, when possible, in family habitations, and each person should be interrogated. The recorder should have sufficient time afterwards to check his material as widely as possible. The method adopted by some investigators of estimating the issue and survival rates of past generations by genealogical tables would be very unreliable in New Ireland, where information even of the present generation is frequently given inaccurately.

128 The enumeration completed, I worked out statistical tables and went back to the field where I inquired into the various phenomena indicated, extending the investigation as much as possible to conditions that appeared relevant to the inquiry, e.g., social organization, economic conditions and culture generally.

* Baker, J. R. *Journal of Royal Anthropological Society*, Vol. LVIII., 1928.

4: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

VITAL STATISTICS OF NEW IRELAND (Bismarck Archipelago) AS REVEALED IN GENEALOGIES

BY HORTENSE POWDERMAKER[1]

Institute of Human Relations, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

INTRODUCTION

121 The purpose of the following study was to obtain birth and death rates which would show whether the native population is declining and, if it is, whether the decline is due to a low birth rate, a high mortality rate, or both. Sex ratios at birth and at the time of reproduction were also obtained.

121 114 The statistics were collected in a Melanesian community in New Ireland, (one of the islands in the Bismarck Archipelago and part of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea) where the writer lived for ten months. One linguistic unit, consisting of five villages on the east coast, about eighty miles from the northern end of the island, provided the material for the ethnological research. The villages were Ambwa, Lesu,[2] Langania, Libba and Tandis, and their total population is approximately 1,200. Residence was established in the village of Lesu, with a population of 222, and the bulk of the statistics were collected there.

METHOD

[126] Four hundred and fifty-five women and their offspring are the basis of the study. The statistics were collected by the genealogical method and figures for three generations were thus obtained. The results show 121 the trend for approximately the last hundred years. The genealogical method serves as a means for the comparison of age groups. Among a

[122] [1] The ethnological field work was done in 1929-1930, under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council and the author is now a Fellow of the National Research Council (U. S.), under the sponsorship of Dr. Clark Wissler.

[2] The spelling on government publications is Lossu. The spelling used in this text more closely approximates the native pronunciation of the word.